



© 2016 Radenko Scekcic

This is an open access article distributed under the CC-BY 3.0 License.

Date of acceptance: November 20, 2015

Date of publication: January 3, 2016

Review article

UDC 911.3:32-027.12(100)"19"

GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGIES AND MODERNITY: MULTIPOLAR WORLD OF NOWADAYS

Radenko Scekcic, PhD

Institute of History, University of Montenegro – Podgorica, Montenegro

scekicr[at]yahoo.com

Abstract

The political map of the planet has transformed substantially during the last century. Former colonial powers had to be satisfied with the perfidious forms of political and economic control. The last decades were marked by the global dominance of the US and its allies, as well as the military superiority of the NATO pact. The beginning of the new millennium was filled with military and financial crises. On the global stage have appeared new economic and military powers and organizations such as the BRICS, the Eurasian Union, the economic power of China, and Russia's comeback in the geopolitical games. The former geopolitical theories become topical again.

Key words: geopolitics; strategy; great power; hibrid wars; USA

GEOPOLITICS AS HIGH POLITICS

In contemporary political discourse, the geopolitics is often synonymous with international, high politics and analyzes the complex relationships between history, politics, and geography. The creator of the term was a Swedish political geographer Rudolf Kjellén in late XIX century, inspired by the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel and his writing “*Politische geographie*” (Political geography) from 1897. The term spread in Europe in the period between the two world wars, and its usage was spread to a global level at the beginning of the Cold War. Since the earliest civilizations, people deliberated about how the particular geographic factors affect the political behavior of the people. Aristotle, for example, wrote in his “*Politics*” about the importance of the insular character of Crete for its role in the political history of ancient Greece (Sirota 2006). Bearing in mind its multidisciplinary character, there is no definition regarding the geopolitics that has been agreed upon, although the term is widely used in the media and politics. Defining national geopolitical strategies represents a complex synthesis of a multidisciplinary approach, in terms of political science, economics, history and geographical position. In geopolitics, politics is more important than geo (space), because the politics precede that mutual relation. Geopolitical analysis and projections serve as a guideline of state policy in the form of strategies and through practical actions. Geopolitics aims to provide answers to two key questions: what will happen and what to do? Often, for the purposes of geopolitical goals, there are abusing terms such as: “‘natural boundaries’, ‘historical right’, ‘living space’, ‘raison d’état’, ‘limited sovereignty’, ‘export of democracy’, ‘preventive war’, ‘human rights protection’ etc.” (Kovacevic 2005, 10). It also represents the common needs

for religious, ethnic, racial, or cultural closeness in order to achieve control over the territories in which people with that collective identity live. In the abstract sense, geopolitics traditionally indicates the links and causal relationships between political powers and geographic space (Osterud 1988, 191). Political, military, economic and cultural superiority of the West at the global level dates from the epoch of maritime conquests at the end of the 15th century. By conquering the rich colonies and industrial development, the West has imposed global domination for centuries.

DOMINATION OF THE WEST IN GEOPOLITICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

The theories of the Western geopolitical thinkers: Ratzel, Mackinder and Haushofer, to a greater or lesser extent are implemented or they are still topical for the broader area that is the elaboration subject in this paper. Ratzel's approach marked the state as a living thing that would collapse after reaching its full development. In order to live and survive, the state needs to expand its territory. While the state is growing, it tends to take the necessary living space ("*lebensraum*"). *Lebensraum* is a term that marked the main motivation for territorial aggression carried out by Nazi Germany. In his book "Mein Kampf", Adolf Hitler described in detail his view that the German people needed lebensraum - land and raw materials for a Greater Germany - and that this must be found on the East. These plans were implemented by the Nazi policy of killing, deportation, "Germanization" and enslavement of the Slavic people, and subsequent colonization of the territory by racially pure German people (Heim 2003, Heiber 1958). This theory was misused during the period of Nazism, although in the West was then emphasized that geopolitics did not have a Nazi orientation by its nature, but it was helpful for democratic states and their (hidden) imperialist plans (Tuathail 1996, 154).

Karl Haushofer defined geopolitics as the science of dependence of political events on the geographical area. He projected future global organization, dividing the world into the three parts, i.e. pan-areas: Pan-America, where the United States would dominate, Pan-Europe, where Germany would dominate, and Pan-Asia which would be dominated by Japan. Anglo-American school of geopolitics refers to the teachings about the domination of the land or the advantage of maritime power (Haushofer 2007).

A great proponent of the United States maturation as a global naval force - Alfred Thayer Mahan, through the analysis of the main ideas of his book "The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783" from 1889, affected the imperialist directions of US foreign policy. Mahan pleaded not only and exclusively for the military occupation of the territories, but also for the impact of economic and cultural factors by empowering the allies and weakening the opponents, which today is known as the term "soft power". (Mahan 2004). Mahan was criticized for the propagation of the global application of the so-called anaconda strategy. This is the idea that the ultimate goal of the US policy (implemented through a whole range of international organizations, of which the most dominant is NATO) was to round off, and then lead to political and economic collapse of its antagonists on the Eurasian land mass, especially Russia and China. It is important to emphasize that Mahan is not the original creator of this strategic approach, as it has already been elaborated by the American general Winfield Scott, who exactly suggested Lincoln "rounding" the separate Southern states as a way to overcome them (Kovacevic 2005, 31).

The English geographer Mackinder with his theory of Heartland from 1904 considered that in the global conflict between land and sea there was a predominance of land, specifically in the states that controlled the Heartland - the central part of the Eurasian continent (Mackinder 1904). He was particularly concerned that under British control it was not the territory that, according to his interpretation of historical events, represented the pivot, i.e. the fulcrum. This central point which the axis of the world history was revolving around, Mackinder called Eurasia. The problem for Mackinder and British imperialists was that Eurasia was controlled by Russia. Mackinder warned that united Russia and Germany could take over from Britain the primacy of global hegemon, because the sea fleet of these two states and their potential could easily overpower the British. His biggest nightmare was construction of a railway line Berlin-Moscow-Baghdad-Persian Gulf, because it would directly jeopardize the British monopole in the Indian Ocean. With that line built, it would have been necessary to alienate Germany and Russia, which introduced Europe in the cataclysm called the First World War (Kovacevic 2005). Mackinder claimed that European countries did by sea what e.g. Alexander of Macedon did by land. They got around, and then surrounded their opponents, taking under their control key coastal points. Thus was born the famous strategy of "anaconda", which opponents of the Atlantic powers still see as a fundamental orientation of the Anglo-American geopolitical efforts.

The "central country" (Heartland) included area of Ukraine, Western Russia and Central Europe. Heartland included the Ukrainian grain fields and Russian oil resources around the Caspian Sea. The theory of the Heartland projected the possibility to create a huge empire/alliance which would not need to use coastal or transoceanic transport in order to maintain its military-industrial complex, and this empire/alliance could not be defeated by the rest of the world, even if incorporated against it. It will articulate the geopolitical formula that still represents one of the main clues of the Atlantic geopolitical current: "Who rules Eastern Europe, commands the Central Country. Who rules the Central Country, commands the World Island (Eurasia + Africa). Who rules the World Island, commands the world." (Mackinder 1919, 194). Perhaps in this conflict it could be seen that historically antagonistic dualism: the sea against the land or, by more contemporary terms told, Atlantis' against Eurasian. The followers of Mackinder's geopolitical ideas may include not only long-standing British prime minister and statesman Winston Churchill (who was his personal friend), but also Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, two immigrants from Central Europe who were in the top of the US government (Kovacevic 2005). Although this Mackinder's theory had appeared before the First World War, the development of the geopolitical events in this War did not deny it. This theory was considered by the Nazis during the Third Reich harmoniously with their desire for monitoring Central Europe and occupying Ukraine, with the slogan "*Drang nach Osten*", or "thrust toward the East". With the appearing of the Cold War, Mackinder's theory regained some credibility, when instead of an armed conflict, it considered more powerful political influence over the nations, which however was the projection of force, only by other means. What in some extent disproved the credibility of this form of geopolitics was the rise of Japan - the country without significant natural resources (Gearoid 2007). Britain had most success and by the beginning of the twentieth century managed to create a huge empire where "the sun never sets". However, the problems arose in maintenance of global power, especially during the (second) Boer War, which lasted from 1899 to 1902. It was clear that Britain would need the help of some strong and spatially well - positioned allied country. Mackinder is one of

the key figures responsible for the success of connecting the then growing power of the United States to the British orbit, and later “hand over” the imperial torch to the American circles (Kearns 2009, 67). Mackinder in his works assigned himself the main task to determine where and in which way the biggest threat to the interests of the British Empire could appear, so the British Empire could be prepared on time and resist. Mackinder mentioned the seven nations for which was necessary to ensure the creation of independent states (Anglo-American protectorates), which could permanently monitor the Central Country. Those were the Poles, the Bohemians etc. (as Mackinder called Czechs and Slovaks), then Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Greeks and Southern Slavs (Mackinder 1904, 206). Some US geopolitical circles even claimed that Uzbekistan could play a significant role in encircling (and “suppressing”) Russia, i.e. the role analogous to the one Mackinder designated to the countries of Eastern Europe. Therefore, they strongly insisted that Uzbekistan tied to the NATO orbit (Megoran 2004).

The opinion of Halford Mackinder was opposed by Nicholas Spykman who believed that the peripheral areas of Eurasia - the so-called Rimland – were militarily and strategically more significant than Hartland, and control over these areas would provide a world domination. Based on these attitudes (whose supporter was also George Kennan), the United States in the Cold War period defined the “containment policy” of the socialist block in the peripheral area of the Eurasian Rimland, precisely by forming regional security alliances (Vukovic 2007).

The hegemony of the Anglo-American circles was especially evident in the period after the First World War, and also after the Cold War, and the most of the arguments by which these circles (also today) justified their power and their activities (the so-called ideology of Atlantism) were for the first time publicly expressed in Mackinder’s articles and books. The international system based on an agreement between the great powers in Yalta in 1945 about the division of spheres of influence, brought the Cold War and paradoxical “rules and certainty” into it, with the balance of power and the fear of nuclear war, controlled conflicts on the periphery and propaganda contest with sharp ideological generalizations. As the spotlight, geopolitics appeared in the period of proclaiming a “clash of civilizations” (Samuel Huntington) and “the end of history” (Francis Fukuyama) in the 90s of the XX century and triumphant promotion of “New world order”. “History has not been completed, but has already become compacted, its trajectory is uncertain”, warned the influential American geopolitical strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski (Brzezinski, 1994). Theorists of geopolitics argue that the history has principles that are repeated from epoch to epoch, and that only the great power that perceives them at a time and uses them for its own interests can ensure growth, development and prosperity. However, Europeans are minorities on the globe, and the history of European colonialism contains so many crimes, lies and human suffering that Gandhi was right when replying that it would be “a good idea” if someone asked him (Kovacevic 2005). Classical geopolitics was designed by the Europeans for the achievement of predominantly Eurocentric interests.

GEOPOLITICAL CONCEPTS OF THE “EAST”: PAN-SLAVISM AND EURASIANISM

We will also consider the theories of Russian and “Eastern” geopolitical thinkers: Nikolai Danilevsky, Peter Savitsky, Aleksandr Dugin and Jean Parvulescu. Generally speaking, in the Russian geopolitical thinking two different streams can be seen, depending on whether cultural or geographic characteristics are given primacy in theoretical concepts. If cultural and religious factors are in the foreground, then, as it will be seen, it is referred to the theorists who represent pan-Slavic ideas, like Danilevsky. On the other hand, highlighting geographic factors and minimizing all the others, led to geopolitical concept in Russian thought that is known under the name of Eurasianism, like the one created by Savitsky, who was the most influential in the group of intellectuals and former officers of the Imperial Russia, and the one who formed the Eurasian movement in the twenties of the last century, after his exile from Russia in the countries of Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia etc.). Many experts of the Russian policy argue that today’s Putin’s Russia with its foreign policy actions implements exactly the ideas of Savitsky and other “Eurasianists”.

The main commitment of Danilevsky, after the creation and unification of Germany in 1871, was analogous creation of a Pan-Slavic federation under the leadership of Russia. Danilevsky indicated examples of hypocritical double standards in the relations between Europe and Russia, because what was tolerated by the European powers, especially by Germany, caused a sharp condemnation when the similar foreign policy moves were withdrawn by Russia (Kovacevic 2005, 38), pointing out that Russia was less conquering and colonizing than Western European countries that criticized its unlawful territorial enlargement. On the side of the Western European nations, which he called “Romano-Germanic”, Danilevsky observed centuries-old “hate and despite” against the Slavic nations, what he explained by the existence of a “strong, hard core” among the Slavs that Westerners could not transform and assimilate. He called to the building of a political project i.e. Pan-Slavic alliance (federation) which, in his opinion, could be the only one able to provide the right of development of an especially Slavic type of civilization and protect it from pressures, blackmails and violence that came from the Romano-Germanic (European) political community. Danilevsky argued that the powerful European circles had an ultimate goal of breaking Russia and destroying the Slavic cultural-historical type, because they saw it as the only “obstacle” to the global dominance of its value system (Danilevsky 1991, 89, 130). The basic theses of Savitsky are related to design a theoretical framework for the formation of the Eurasian empire led by Russia. Eurasia was therefore, according to Savitsky, a “third” continent. It is important to note, and therefore to point out the main difference between Eurasianists and pan-Slavists, that all nations that lived and still live in this area, irrespective of their religion, are considered as constituent and equal nations of Eurasia (Savitsky 1997). Savitsky believed in a global-historical mission of Russia, often saying that Russians, “more expressly than other nations, have two countries: Russia and the world” (Savitsky 1997). That is why, according to Savitsky, the enterprises of the Russian people always had among the national level a universalistic messianic dimension as well. A similar statement about national particularities and messianism are now also popular among American neoconservatives. It is interesting that this statement was convincingly disputed by the Russian President Vladimir Putin (whom many consider

to be the protagonist of Eurasianism), in his letter to the New York Times regarding the events in Syria. If Putin generally despises the messianic role of the United States, does he have the same attitude towards the messianic role of Russia? (Kovacevic 2005, 43). The Eurasian movement, that under the leadership of Savitsky played an important intellectual role in Eastern Europe between the two wars and even Haushofer's journal "Zeitschrift für Geopolitik" published articles about it, at the beginning of the new millennium became a reality, by the creation of the Eurasian Union.

Aleksandr Dugin presents the history of modern Russia as a struggle for influence between the two antagonistic leaguers whose existence was meant by all theorists of classical geopolitics, i.e. leaguer of "Atlantists" (sea forces) and leaguer of "Eurasians" (land forces). Dugin blamed "Atlantic" lobby (especially the impact of the UK) for provoking both World Wars and for creating the conditions for extremely violent clashes between Germany and Russia (Dugin 2005, Kovacevic 2005).

Romanian intellectual Jean Parvulescu called the Eurasian empire "the last empire", "empire of the end", "*imperium ultimum*", because for him it represented the final reconciliation and integration of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam into a single religion, firstly in terms of Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and then Islam as well. Opponents of this idea are located by Parvulescu in the Anglo-American circles, for which he believed that they are ready to use even nuclear weapons to prevent the political community (federation) between France, Germany and Russia, which would act as the backbone of the new (counter-global) World order. The latest ideological incarnation of this opposition was found by Parvulescu in the works of American professor Samuel Huntington about an unavoidable confrontation of civilizations. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of the document named "US Strategy of National Defense" in the early 1990s, in which it was explicitly said that by using all means available, the US must ensure dominance in the world and status of the only world power (unipolar world) (Parvulescu 2006, Kovacevic 2005).

NEW GEOPOLITICAL GAMES ON THE "CHESSBOARD"

Military-political block NATO, created for the "confining" of the USSR, since the beginning of the 90s is consistently moving towards the border of the Russian Federation, ignoring its geopolitical interests. After the fall of communism, the ideological disagreements between Russia and the US disappeared, but what did not disappear was the rivalry that has nothing to do with ideology, but with geostrategic circumvention of spheres of influence and domination. Francis Fukuyama assumed that after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the decline of the USSR and its communist ideology the "end of history" came, or in other words, the last stage of development of societies, in which almost all points on the planet accept democracy, free markets, capitalism and human rights. Despite the promises given to Mikhail Gorbachev after the Cold War era, NATO spread to the East including in its composition some former Soviet republics as well (Cehulic 2010, 162). Hence, NATO entered in the area that Russia considered as a "zone of its protected interests". Moscow has lately adapted to this aggressive penetration of the West in the 90s of XX century. Only with the arrival of Vladimir Putin at the head of Russia the sphere of (its) interests began to strengthen. Washington answered with a proven recipe - the methods used on the Balkans. In this manner, Ukraine was affected, in terms of a field of conflicting interests. By learning

the Western techniques and style of media battles in the past decades, Moscow proved itself more superior during the Ukrainian crisis and the Crimean issues showed more superior in this hybrid war. Although it is obvious that neither the West nor Russia lag behind in hybrid war, at least when one looks at artificial knockdown price of oil and gas, the fall of the value of the ruble in Russia - NATO more openly admits that Russia has shown that knows how to lead a "hybrid war". The crisis in Ukraine injected a new dose of adrenaline into NATO and handed it a new justification for its existence. The Cold War is not completely over yet, so the former enemies behind the "iron curtain" were not seen as potential partners by Washington. On the contrary, they continued to treat Russia, as the successor of the USSR, on the same scales as in the Cold War, while the states of the socialist camp simply conquered their interests. Today, this is most obvious in Poland and the Baltic countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and the entire socialist block in Europe, the unipolar dominance which was built by the United States and its allies over the ruins of this and such a world, however, proved however to be a short-lived victory. The unipolarism which was established during the 90s of XX century through the idea of a new world order, the United States, as the only remaining global superpower and the unification of Germany as an economic force (which sought after economic supremacy in Europe, substantiated also by political influence and ambitions after unification), imposed the new rules of the game. The dominance of the US and Western values marked the creation of a new, American order. Military interventions in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, the "Arab spring", the financing of upheaval in Ukraine - all those are the results of the American foreign policy. The bipolar world, which in the last decade of the XX century was turned into unipolar, with one global superpower, already in the first decade of the new XXI century gradually takes shape of a multipolar one.

The economic and military buildup of China, creating new "multi-vectorial" Russian foreign policy in line with the new global trends and multipolarity, whose outlines are looming up - lead to new geopolitical game rules. The political influence and importance of the USA in the world are still indisputable and certainly will be alike in the future due to their military power, and they play one of the key roles on the planet, although they will be forced to share their once dominant power with other global players. Now, there is less talking about globalization that unites the planet, and more about a new cold war between the West and Russia, and possibly other new powers such as China, Iran and India. A new form of geopolitics, in the form of geo-economics, capital exports, investments, free trade etc., represents a field for new expansion of political interests. Geo-economics which sublimates economic, geographic, strategic, political, and cultural resources of one area has become an important segment in the field of foreign political activity in the modern world. A common feature of geopolitics and geo-economics is that both are methods of analysis and interpretation of the balance of forces at the international level. Geo-economics relies on economic resources. It excludes violence. In recent years, as examples, we can notice energy agreements like North and South stream, or favorable government loans. The Russian Federation is trying to regain its influence on various points on the planet, mainly through the forms of economic and political integration and alliances such as the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and the Eurasian Union and the BRICS (economic connections: Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa), in the epoch often referred as "post-American". BRICS is the biggest market on the planet, because it covers 2.9 billion people, or about 40% of the global population. The economic strength of

BRICS countries, which together provide over 26% of the world's Gross Domestic Product, the military power of Russia and China, the social chaos and refugee crisis created after the Western interference - tend to reduce the global power of the West. There is no doubt that its power will be significant in the ensuing coming period, but it will have to take into account the interests of other geopolitical players. George Friedman, the head of intelligence of the analytical agency "Stratfor" points out that the United States in the last 100 years carried out a very consistent foreign policy, whose main goal was – not to allow any force to gain too much power in Europe. It should be noted that the US has always felt that the greatest danger threatens from a potential alliance between Russia and Germany.

CONCLUSION: MULTIPOLAR WORLD AND MODERN CHALLENGES

A new form of geopolitics, in the form of geo-economics, capital exports, investments, free trade etc. is a field of new forms of influence. Geo-economics which sublimates economic, geographic, strategic, political, and cultural resources of one area becomes an important segment and field of foreign political activity in the modern world. A common feature of geopolitics and geo-economics is that both are methods of analysis and interpretation of the balance of forces at the international level. Geo-economics is both the purpose and means of geopolitics as practice. Political power is used from immemorial time for economic goals to be achieved. Geo-economics relies on economic means. It excludes violence (Babic 2010). The USA are swamped in a number of interventions around the world, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya, etc, with a huge national debt and there is a tendency of strengthening other forces which are seeking their place on the global stage. The economy of China and the Russian armed forces combined have become a threat number one for the US. The engagement of Russia, Iran and China at a new global focal point in Syria 2015 indicates that the relations on the global chessboard of foreign policy are slowly changing. Until recently, it was unthinkable that someone openly could oppose to the inviolable United States in "establishing world peace and order". The geopolitical struggle for flows of energy, oil, gas, mining and fight for resources by "hybrid war" – are a feature of contemporary geopolitics. It is obvious that the theories of the Heartland, Rimland, *Lebensraum*, Eurasianism or Pan-Slavism are not forgotten and that they are still present actually. They are being carried out only under changed circumstances and with certain modifications.

REFERENCES

1. Aly, Götz & Heim, Susanne 2003. *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction*. Phoenix.
2. Babić, Blagoje. 2010. *Odnosi Kine i EU – geoekonomska osovina u razvoju*, Beograd:MP3.
3. Bžezinski, Zbignjev 1994. *Globalna previranja uoči 21. stoljeća*. Zagreb: Otvoreno učilište.
4. Čehulić, Lidija 2002. *Euroatlantizam*, Zagreb: Politička kultura.
5. Heiber, Helmut 1958. *Der Generalplan Ost, Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Volume 6.
6. Kearns, Gerry 2009. *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*, London: Oxford University Press.
7. Kovačević, Filip. 2014. *Teoretičari klasične geopolitike*. Podgorica : CGO.
8. Mackinder, Halford 1904. “*The Geographical Pivot of History*”. *The Geographical Journal*, 28: 4.
9. Mackinder, Halford 1919. *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study of the Politics of Reconstruction*, London: Constable and Company LTD.
10. Mahan, Alfred Thayer 2004. *The Influence of Sea-Power on History 1660-1783*, Boston: Little, Brown And Company
11. Megoran, Nick 2004. “Revisiting the “Pivot”: The Influence of Halford Mackinder on the Analysis of Uzbekistan’s International Relations”, *The Geographical Journal*, 170: 4.
12. Oyvind, Osterud 1988. *Upotrebe i zloupotrebe geopolitike*, *Journal of Peace Research*, br. 2.
13. Roberts, Džon 2002). *Evropa 1880-1945*, Beograd: Clio.
14. Subotić, Milan 1995. „Nikolaj Danilevski: Teorija kulturno-istorijskih tipova i slovenofilstvo“, *Filozofija i društvo* VII.
15. Tuathail, Gearóid (1996) *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, London: Routledge.
16. Tuathail, Gearoid 2007 *Uvod u geopolitiku*. Zagreb: Politička kultura.
17. Vuković, Nebojša. 2007 *Logika Imperije – Nikolas Spajkman i savremena američka geopolitika*. Beograd: Konras.
18. Данилевский, Н. Я. 1991. *Россия и Европа*, Москва: Книга.
19. Дугин, А. Г. 2005. “Великая война континентов”, *Коспиратология*, Москва: Арктогея.
20. Парвулеско, Жан 2006. *Путни и Евразийская империя*, СПб: Амфора.
21. Савицкий, П. Н. 1997. *Континент Евразия*, Москва: Аграф.
22. Сирота, Н. М. 2006. *Геополитика. Краткий курс*. СПб: Питер.
23. Хаусхофер, Karl 2007. *Континентальный блок: Берлин-Москва-Токио*, Геополитика: Хрестоматия, СПб: Питер.